

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



# ***New York State Testing Program***

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## **English Language Arts Test Session 1**

**Grade 8**

**Spring 2025**

**RELEASED QUESTIONS**

# Session 1



## TIPS FOR TAKING THE TEST

Here are some ideas to help you do your best:

- Read the whole passage before you answer the questions. Most questions will only make sense after you read the whole passage.
- You might need to read the passage more than once to answer a question.
- Read each question carefully. Take your time.
- A question may include a quote from a passage. You might need to review both the quote and the whole passage to answer the question.

When you write your answers

- make sure to answer the whole question;
- use examples or details from the text;
- write in complete sentences; and
- use correct spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation.

## Directions

Read this story. Then answer questions 1 through 7.

*Friends Tom and Yolanda, who is also called Yo, created SwiftBot-1, a basketball-playing robot.*

# Excerpt from *The Robot Olympics*

*by Victor Appleton*

- 1        SwiftBot-1 gleamed beneath the LED lights overhead. His silver-metallic body was about my height, roughly five feet ten inches, and mimicked your basic humanoid design: two arms, two legs, one head, and so on. Jointed arms gave him a standing reach of over seven feet. Inside his lightweight, carbon-fiber exterior was an array of integrated circuits, servos, optical sensors, wires, and batteries. His smiling steel face was just for show, except for the pair of glowing infrared sensors that served as his eyes. . . .
- 2        “Your ball.” I tossed the bright orange sphere over to SwiftBot-1, which caught it with both hands. This part of my private lab had been converted into a half-court playing area for testing the robot’s hoop skills one-on-one. “Play offense.”
- 3        Voice-recognition software let him respond to my verbal command. He dribbled the ball against the floor, keeping it close to his body for better control. Titanium-alloy muscles flexed smoothly as he went into action. *Looks good*, I thought, nodding in approval. Teaching a robot to dribble hadn’t been easy. My friend Yolanda and I had spent hours trying to get the programming and mechanics right. . . .
- 4        SwiftBot charged toward the free-throw lane while I scooted to keep between him and the hoop. Pausing right at the edge of the paint, he went into the classic triple-threat stance: feet spread, knees apart, elbows in. Like a human athlete, SwiftBot could either shoot, pass, or dribble from this posture. Of course, with no one to pass to in this one-on-one match, the robot’s options were reduced to either dribbling or taking a shot. I couldn’t wait to see what he’d do next. . . .
- 5        Sure enough, SwiftBot went airborne the next second. Foam rubber springs in the soles of his feet gave him extra lift as he pushed off the floor. Metallic fingers held the ball poised above his head, ready to go. At the very top of his jump, SwiftBot released the ball from his fingers. He was going for it!
- 6        I jumped, too, hoping to block his shot, but he had too much altitude on me. For a second, I kicked myself for making his arms so long. Eyes wide, I watched the ball arc over my head, just beyond my fingertips. SwiftBot had calculated its trajectory perfectly. The ball passed right through the hoop without even grazing the rim. . . .

**GO ON**

- 7        He landed easily back onto the floor, the springs in his feet doubling as shock absorbers. I was stoked to see him stick the landing so well. The first couple of times we'd played against each other, he had lost his balance after every other jump. I winced at the memory of SwiftBot toppling over onto the floor. He still had trouble getting up if he landed flat on his back, but, thanks to a new-and-improved internal gyroscope, he didn't fall down as much anymore, thank goodness. I was tired of hammering out the dents in his outer casing. . . .
- 8        Dribbling the ball against the floor, I darted to the right of the free-throw lane. The sound of the orange leather ball bouncing against the hardwood echoed throughout the lab. Adrenaline rushed through my veins as I rushed toward the low post, keeping my eyes on the hoop. My own sneakers were equipped with sensors, microchips, and a motor and cabling system that allowed the shoes to adjust to my gait on the fly. I felt like I was running on air. . . .
- 9        The higher I dribbled, the quicker I could move, so I really let the ball bounce as I sprinted to the left of SwiftBot and took my shot. I put a bit of backspin on the ball as it left my fingers, wishing for the hundredth time that I could engineer a way for SwiftBot to do the same. That was just too subtle a move for the robot's mechanical fingers to master, however. His tactile<sup>1</sup> sensors weren't that precise. . . .
- 10       But SwiftBot wasn't beaten yet. My heart leaped as the robot sprang into the air at a forty-five-degree angle. His right arm stretched out above his head, intercepting the spinning ball in midair. Leather smacked against a carbon-fiber palm as SwiftBot batted the ball back at me. . . .
- 11       Taking advantage of my human speed, I dashed around SwiftBot, dribbling the ball with my right hand. My plan was to make a close-range shot on the run before the robot could get into position to block me again. I scrambled toward the hoop until I was only about six feet from the basket. Without coming to a halt, I lifted off on my left foot and with my right hand aimed for the upper-right corner of the white targeting box painted on the clear SwiftGlass backboard. My eyes tracked the ball as I dropped toward the floor. Had I made the layup?
- 12       Too late to stop my shot, SwiftBot rushed in front of me, hoping to snag the rebound just in case my shot missed. His metal arms shot up to box me out.
- 13       It was good strategy, but a wasted effort in this case. The ball hit the backboard right where it was supposed to. With a resounding boom, the ball banked off the SwiftGlass into the net. *Swish!*
- 14       "Game over," I announced, but SwiftBot's computerized brain had already calculated the score as well. His arms dropped to his sides and he came to a halt. He knew that my eleven points meant that I had won the match. Fortunately, Yo had programmed him to be a good loser. . . .

- 15            SwiftBot stood quietly upon the court. If nothing else, he looked less tired than I felt. Breathing hard, I retrieved the ball and strolled over to the sideline, where I dropped down onto a bench. A bottle of cold water was waiting for me, and I gulped down the liquid eagerly. SwiftBot didn't have to worry about getting dehydrated, but I did.

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<sup>1</sup>**tactile:** anything related to the sense of touch

**GO ON**

1

What do the details in paragraph 3 reveal about SwiftBot?

- A He has been taught to perform certain actions.
- B He is learning to use his voice to communicate.
- C He has been able to play basketball since he was created.
- D He is able to teach other robots how to play basketball.

2

Read this sentence from paragraph 4.

**I couldn't wait to see what he'd do next.**

How does this sentence develop the narrator's viewpoint?

- A It shows that the narrator is interested in creating a team of basketball-playing robots.
- B It shows that the narrator believes SwiftBot is unable to perform at the expected level.
- C It shows that the narrator is unaware of what SwiftBot is programmed to do.
- D It shows that the narrator does not know which action SwiftBot will perform.

3

What does the phrase "eyes wide" as used in paragraph 6 reveal about the narrator?

- A He is impressed by SwiftBot's ability.
- B He is concerned the ball will hit him.
- C He is confused by SwiftBot's action.
- D He is disappointed he is unable to stop the ball.

4

In paragraph 9, why does the narrator say, “I put a bit of backspin on the ball as it left my fingers, wishing for the hundredth time that I could engineer a way for SwiftBot to do the same”?

- A The narrator would like to give SwiftBot as many human-like abilities as possible.
- B The narrator regrets the limited effort that originally went into SwiftBot’s design.
- C The narrator realizes that SwiftBot requires many more hours of programming.
- D The narrator is questioning SwiftBot’s ability to compete with humans.

5

As used in paragraph 11, what does the word “tracked” suggest about the narrator?

- A He believes he will win the game.
- B He is paying close attention.
- C He has doubts about his basketball skills.
- D He is clumsy in his movements.

6

Which sentence reveals the difficulty the narrator has in teaching SwiftBot to play a sport?

- A “Inside his lightweight, carbon-fiber exterior was an array of integrated circuits, servos, optical sensors, wires, and batteries.” (paragraph 1)
- B “He dribbled the ball against the floor, keeping it close to his body for better control.” (paragraph 3)
- C “I was tired of hammering out the dents in his outer casing.” (paragraph 7)
- D “His arms dropped to his sides and he came to a halt.” (paragraph 14)

**GO ON**

Which sentence **best** supports a theme of machines having advantages over humans?

- A** “His silver-metallic body was about my height, roughly five feet ten inches, and mimicked your basic humanoid design: two arms, two legs, one head, and so on.” (paragraph 1)
- B** “He landed easily back onto the floor, the springs in his feet doubling as shock absorbers.” (paragraph 7)
- C** “Leather smacked against a carbon-fiber palm as SwiftBot batted the ball back at me.” (paragraph 10)
- D** “SwiftBot didn’t have to worry about getting dehydrated, but I did.” (paragraph 15)



## **D**irections

Read this article. Then answer questions 22 through 28.

# Reasoning Like a Raven

*by Charles C. Hofer*

1 When Aesop first told his famous fable some 2,500 years ago, the crow and its close cousin, the raven, were already well known around the world for their crafty smarts. In one ancient Greek myth, the god Apollo used a raven as a messenger. Native Americans of the Pacific Northwest depicted the crow as a wise trickster. And the Norse god Odin kept two ravens as sneaky spies.

2 Crows and ravens belong to a family of birds known as corvids, a group that also includes jays, magpies, jackdaws, and rooks. Corvids have gained respect because of their unique intelligence, a type of creative smarts like no other in the animal kingdom. For starters, corvids are known to solve complex problems, use tools to obtain food, play in a social environment, cache food (or hide it for later), and recognize the faces of human friends and enemies.

### THE MOTHER OF INVENTION

3 Ravens, crows, and other corvids *need* to be intelligent in order to survive. Corvids mostly eat foods other animals leave behind. As scavengers, they help clean ecosystems by consuming what others don't want.

4 To be a successful scavenger, one also needs a special kind of brains. A scavenger must first identify a food source and then problem-solve to figure out how to obtain that food—without getting into trouble. A raven can't just fly into a pack of wolves that's devouring an elk. The raven has to think, be patient, and wait for an opportunity to sneak in and steal food from the hungry wolves.

5 The corvids' unique intelligence has allowed these birds to flourish in our modern world as well. Crows, ravens, and jays have found great success living among humans in cities and towns across the globe. Stealing from picnics, opening trash bins for food, and picking at roadkill are just a few examples of their successful adaptation to modern life.

**GO ON**

## ANIMAL INTELLIGENCE

6 In general, intelligence can be thought of as the *application* of knowledge. In other words, it means taking what you’ve learned and putting it to use. In this sense, all animals are intelligent to some degree. A creature might know how to find food or how to build a nest for shelter. But what if that food supply disappears? What if there are no more good trees in which to nest? The ability to adapt to a changing environment is what sets corvid intelligence apart from other animals. “Intelligent animals are able to figure out and learn solutions to novel<sup>1</sup> problems,” says Emily Faun Cory, who studies raven behavior and intelligence at the University of Arizona. “Corvids show remarkable learning ability, creativity, and behavioral flexibility, with an ability to take advantage of other species.”

7 The animal kingdom is full of intelligent animals. Dolphins, monkeys, parrots, and your pet dog are just a few examples. But corvids have a creative intelligence like no other animal. Well, actually, there is one animal with a similar kind of creative intelligence: *Homo sapiens*.

## BIG BRAINS

8 To understand how corvids and humans think alike, we need to look a little closer at our brains. Animal intelligence largely depends on a rule that scientists call the “brain-to-body ratio.” This rule states that animals with larger brains compared to the rest of their bodies are generally more intelligent.

9 For example, the human brain is enormous compared to the rest of our body. Our brain weighs up to three pounds (1.4 kilograms) and accounts for nearly 2 percent of our total body weight. Therefore, humans have a very high brain-to-body ratio. Now consider the blue whale, the largest animal on Earth. The blue whale brain can weigh over 16 pounds (7.3 kilograms)! But the blue whale’s brain-to-body ratio is very low. That huge brain accounts for less than 0.01 percent of the whale’s total body weight. That tiny ratio doesn’t make for an especially smart whale.

10 Like humans, corvids have high brain-to-body ratios. The New Caledonia crow lives on a small group of islands in the South Pacific Ocean and is widely regarded as the smartest of all corvids. Its brain accounts for about 2.4 percent of its body weight. That’s huge! The New Caledonia crow has a brain-to-body ratio similar to that of a small monkey, another animal with high intelligence.

## GREAT MINDS THINK ALIKE

- 11 Besides the brain-to-body ratio, human and corvid brains don't have much else in common. The structure of each brain is very different. However, both brains function in similar ways.
- 12 So how did humans and corvids *both* get so smart? The answer can be found in something called convergent evolution. This is when unrelated animals take different evolutionary routes to reach the same result. Look at insects, birds, and bats. These distinctly different animals are all capable of self-powered flight. However, each took a different evolutionary path to be able to fly.
- 13 The same rule of convergent evolution can be applied to the similarities between the human brain and the corvid brain. "Birds and mammals are very different from each other," says Cory. "The brains are also built very differently. But animals from both groups seem to approach problems in the same manner and remember information in much the same ways."
- 14 Although human and corvid intelligence evolved independently, they have important similarities today. Scientists believe that understanding the corvid brain may actually tell us about the intelligence of alien life forms.
- 15 Whether or not we will discover intelligent aliens still remains to be seen. But if our two worlds do meet some day, will we understand one another? Or will we be just two intelligent life forms crowing at each other?

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<sup>1</sup>**novel:** never seen before

**GO ON**

**22** Which sentence states a central idea of the section “The Mother of Invention”?

- A** Corvids have a special way of thinking that helps them survive.
- B** Animals that are scavengers help to clean our ecosystems.
- C** Ravens identify food then learn how to get it.
- D** Corvids can survive among humans all around the world.

**23** What does the phrase “behavioral flexibility” mean as it is used in paragraph 6?

- A** ability to travel to different places
- B** ability to learn different ways of moving
- C** ability to solve new problems
- D** ability to squeeze into small spaces

**24** Which statement represents an important distinction the author makes between corvids and blue whales in the section “Big Brains”?

- A** Corvids are more intelligent than blue whales because they are very large birds.
- B** Blue whales should be smarter than they are because they are so much larger than corvids.
- C** A blue whale’s brain, which can weigh over 16 pounds, is much larger than a corvid’s brain.
- D** When comparing brain size to body size, a corvid’s brain-to-body ratio is greater than a blue whale’s.

25

Which sentence from the article **best** supports the claim in paragraph 2?

- A “As scavengers, they help clean ecosystems by consuming what others don’t want.” (paragraph 3)
- B “The raven has to think, be patient, and wait for an opportunity to sneak in and steal food from the hungry wolves.” (paragraph 4)
- C “Animal intelligence largely depends on a rule that scientists call the ‘brain-to-body ratio.’ ” (paragraph 8)
- D “The same rule of convergent evolution can be applied to the similarities between the human brain and the corvid brain.” (paragraph 13)

26

“Necessity is the mother of invention” is a very old proverb. It means that when we need something, we use our intelligence to invent ways to get it. Which detail from the article shows that this can apply to corvids?

- A “A scavenger must first identify a food source and then problem-solve to figure out how to obtain that food—without getting into trouble.” (paragraph 4)
- B “. . . animals with larger brains compared to the rest of their bodies are generally more intelligent.” (paragraph 8)
- C “But animals from both groups seem to approach problems in the same manner and remember information in much the same ways.” (paragraph 13)
- D “. . . understanding the corvid brain may actually tell us about the intelligence of alien life forms.” (paragraph 14)

**GO ON**

27

This question is worth 2 credits.

In “Reasoning Like a Raven,” how does paragraph 10 connect to a central idea of the article? Use **two** details from the article to support your response.

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28

This question is worth 2 credits.

What does the phrase “convergent evolution” as used in paragraphs 12 and 13 of the article reveal about the brains of corvids and humans? Use **two** details from the article to support your response.

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**STOP**

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# ***New York State Testing Program***

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## **English Language Arts Test Session 2**

**Grade 8**

**Spring 2025**

**RELEASED QUESTIONS**



# Session 2



## TIPS FOR TAKING THE TEST

Here are some ideas to help you do your best:

- Read the whole passage before you answer the questions. Most questions will only make sense after you read the whole passage.
- You might need to read the passage more than once to answer a question.
- Read each question carefully. Take your time.
- A question may include a quote from a passage. You might need to review both the quote and the whole passage to answer the question.

When you write your answers

- make sure to answer the whole question;
- use examples or details from the text;
- write in complete sentences; and
- use correct spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation.

For the last question in this test book, you may plan your writing on the Planning Page provided. However, do NOT write your final answer on the Planning Page. Write your final answer on the lined pages.

## Directions

Read this story. Then answer questions 29 through 35.

*A Japanese immigrant family arrives in Brazil for the first time.*

### Excerpt from *Brazil-Marú*

*by Karen Tei Yamashita*

- 1        It was 1925. São Paulo, Brazil. I stuck my head out the window, straining to see the beginning and the end of the train as it chugged slowly up the side of the mountain. The tepid heat of the port of Santos below rose around us in a soft cloud that silently engulfed my view of the now distant port and the ship and the shimmering ocean beyond. The creeping altitude and the rocking train seemed to lull the minds of the passengers so recently stunned by our first impressions. I had seen it myself from the ship below—the sheer green wall lifting into a mass of shifting clouds, daring us to scale it.
- 2        How many other Japanese immigrants had already witnessed this scene? Since 1908, they had arrived at this same port in shipload after shipload until there were thousands of Japanese, the majority laboring on coffee plantations in the state of São Paulo.
- 3        I had stumbled down the gangway clutching a bundle entrusted to me. My mother was carrying little Yōzo on her back. Eiji clutched her dress with one hand, and Hiro held on to Eiji. My father lumbered down with our heavy bags. Although I was only nine years old, I was still the oldest and had to take care of myself. I saw the scholar Shūhei Mizuoka already on the dock struggling with his bags loaded with books. For a moment I sensed a need to look back at the ship we were leaving, and there at the top of the plank was Grandma Uno still standing transfixed, staring at this idea we all had traveled so far to see, this Brazil. . . .
- 4        The din of this activity pitched about us, but we were oddly silent, dumbfounded upon seeing what two months of dreams aboard a plodding ship upon the sea had brought. The dank humidity pressed upon us. I saw Grandma Uno’s shoulders stoop; perhaps her old heart hesitated. Her grandson Kantaro nudged her at her elbow. “What is it?” he asked. She looked up at him, so tall and handsome and so anxious to step onto this land.
- 5        “Ichiro!” my mother called back to me. I hurried on, but not before I saw Grandma Uno push Kantaro aside and walk purposely down alone to land.

**GO ON**

- 6 We had borne the heavy humidity of the port of Santos along with all our worldly possessions from the ship to the waiting train, and now we were climbing upward with our burdens, struggling against our better senses to gain the plateau. There was some relief as we climbed; the shadowed air filtered through the dense vegetation but so did the smell. We had traded the salty taste of the sea and the fragrance of coffee and bananas for this other smell. It had flooded the car somewhere below us as we passed through what seemed to be a black swamp of rotting vegetation that had dropped off in disintegrating pieces from the great green wall. We had captured the odor of that putrid rot within the confines of the rocking train. I had not felt seasick those many days at sea, but now suddenly I was overcome with nausea. . . .
- 7 “Well, Ichiro,” my father said. “What do you think? It’s beyond my imagination,” my father answered himself. “So here we are.” We looked around at my brothers huddled around and in my mother’s lap. They were all sleeping in a big heap. My father looked at me and smiled, “Ichiro, somehow I knew you’d be awake for this.”
- 8 The train came to a stop at what seemed to be a rural way station. It was also a marketplace of sorts. Vendors sat with their produce spread on mats or makeshift stands. A few peddlers ran along the train shouting through the windows. They had wares in baskets: dried meats, fresh fish, cakes and sweets, strange fruits like bananas and papayas, and birds—some dead, some alive. A great wall of chickens squawked from their cages. I ran out the open door of the car, finally overcome by my sickness, and heaved the contents of my poor stomach onto the new land. My relief was sudden, but my attention was easily diverted by a boy who ran toward me chasing a squealing piglet. He caught the piglet, but it squirmed away and ran off, knocking me to the ground. It had jumped on my chest and over my head, leaving its dirty prints and sour smell behind. I felt an indescribable disgust and joy all at once urging me to join the boy in his chase, scurrying after the slippery pig and running toward that great wall of chickens. Just as it was about to slip between the cages, I dove upon the squealing pig, pinning it beneath my chest. I looked up at cages teetering above to see the face of the pig’s young owner, a mixture of relief and gratitude and comedy glowing in his features. For a short moment that boy and I were locked in some middle space where our two curious minds stared at the unknown.
- 9 I remember that face as if it were yesterday, the golden sun-bleached burnish at the tips of his curly brown hair, the dark olive skin beneath a healthy glow of sweat, the richness of his deep brown eyes. The boy spoke in a language I could not understand, and yet, I was sure from that moment on that I would soon understand everything. Over the years, I have thought from time to time that I had caught a glimpse of that very boy again, but of course, it would never be the same boy. If he is indeed alive today, he must be, like me, another old man with memories.

29

What effect does the phrase “daring us to scale it” in paragraph 1 have on the story?

- A It suggests that the new land poses a great challenge for the immigrants.
- B It suggests that the narrator will successfully adjust to the unfamiliar environment.
- C It suggests that the immigrants will have to physically climb beyond where the train can reach.
- D It suggests that there will be fighting between the immigrants and the other inhabitants.

30

Which sentence **best** shows that Ichiro comes to believe that moving to the new land will result in a positive change to his life?

- A “I felt an indescribable disgust and joy all at once urging me to join the boy in his chase, scurrying after the slippery pig and running toward that great wall of chickens.” (paragraph 8)
- B “I looked up at cages teetering above to see the face of the pig’s young owner, a mixture of relief and gratitude and comedy glowing in his features.” (paragraph 8)
- C “The boy spoke in a language I could not understand, and yet, I was sure from that moment on that I would soon understand everything.” (paragraph 9)
- D “Over the years, I have thought from time to time that I had caught a glimpse of that very boy again, but of course, it would never be the same boy.” (paragraph 9)

**GO ON**

- 31 How do the actions of the piglet's young owner in paragraphs 8 and 9 affect the plot?
- A They cause the narrator to believe that his purpose in this new land is to help others.
  - B They cause the narrator to have to choose between his old culture and a new one in Brazil.
  - C They make the narrator feel hopeful that he will be able to adjust in a new country.
  - D They make the narrator feel disappointed with the new surroundings when he arrives in Brazil.
- 32 What is the effect of the author's use of the verbs "stumbled," "clutched," and "lumbered" in paragraph 3?
- A These verbs show that the family is moving with difficulty from the ship to the land.
  - B These verbs suggest how much baggage the family has brought along on the trip.
  - C These verbs demonstrate the variety of reactions the family members have to Brazil.
  - D These verbs indicate the excitement the family feels at arriving at their destination.
- 33 Some researchers believe that humans are more likely to remember pleasant and positive experiences than negative ones. Which statement **best** reflects this idea in the story?
- A Ichiro remembers not feeling seasick while on the boat, but he becomes nauseous when the train stops at the marketplace in Brazil.
  - B Ichiro has a stronger emotional reaction to helping a stranger catch a piglet than to the difficulties he has when arriving in Brazil.
  - C Ichiro can more accurately describe the experience of seeing the vendors in the marketplace than he can the experience of helping the boy catch a piglet.
  - D Ichiro is very affected by the young boy that he meets upon leaving the train, and so he makes an intentional effort to meet with the boy several times over the years.

**34**

How do Ichiro and his father see their arrival in Brazil differently?

- A** Ichiro does not understand why they left Japan, while his father knows of their reasons.
- B** Ichiro sees the need to help others, while his father is focused on achieving his own goals.
- C** Ichiro is focused on the immediate difficulties, while his father sees Brazil as better than expected.
- D** Ichiro is eager to explore Brazil, while his father struggles with adjusting to the new country.

**35**

How does the final paragraph contribute to a central idea in the story?

- A** It reveals that seeing someone after a long time apart causes both people to remember the good times they shared together.
- B** It shows that the pleasant memories of significant life events often become stronger than the negative details.
- C** It demonstrates how older people often realize that past struggles were worth the difficulty when they result in new friendships.
- D** It illustrates that memories can fade unless efforts are made to stay connected with those who shared those experiences.

**GO ON**

## **D**irections

Read this article. Then answer questions 36 through 42.

### Excerpt from *Villages in the Sky*

by Ellen Garin

#### **Lost and Found!**

1        One December morning in 1888, Richard Wetherill and his brother-in-law, Charles Mason, were riding along a mesa in the mountains of southwestern Colorado searching for lost cattle. Their breath turned to vapor in the cold December morning air, and the snow on the ground crunched under their horses' hooves.

2        The cowboys followed the cattle tracks until they heard the lowing of their cattle. After they had counted the herd, they looked around at the spectacular views. As they looked across the vast canyon, something caught their attention. There, nestled high up under an overhanging cliff on the other side of the canyon, was something quite amazing. The cowboys rode around to the other side of the canyon, dismounted, and climbed down the cliff on foot to get a closer look. They were about to make an important discovery.

#### **The Cliff Dwellings at Mesa Verde**

3        Wetherill and Mason had discovered a large cliff dwelling that had been abandoned hundreds of years ago by ancient Pueblo people. It had been built into an alcove<sup>1</sup> where chunks of sandstone had fallen off the cliff, creating an overhang. The overhang protected the cliff dwelling from the weather, which is why it was intact hundreds of years later.

4        Cliff dwellings like the one discovered by Wetherill and Mason were constructed of sandstone. Builders filled in the spaces where the stone bricks fit together with smaller stones, mud, and wood pieces.

5        Like apartment houses today, the dwellings were multilevel, housing many families. People needed to climb up or down ladders to reach lower and upper levels of the cliff dwellings. Living areas in the complex were about six by eight feet. Their ceilings were made of wood planks, and some homes had colorful wall paintings. The low height of the doorways indicates that people then were shorter than they are today.

6        Below the living area, and reached only by ladder, was a round room called a kiva (KEE-vuh), which was used for ceremonial purposes. . . .

**GO ON**

## The Ancestral Puebloans

- 7 For about 700 years, Mesa Verde was a thriving community of many thousands of Native American people now referred to as Ancestral Puebloans. These people were master builders, skilled craftsmen, and adept farmers of a difficult, dry land. They also traded surplus goods and food with other Native American communities.
- 8 The earliest Ancestral Puebloan settlements date back to the year 600. For most of their time in the Mesa Verde area, these people lived in houses and farmed on top of the mesa. Their first villages consisted of homes called pit houses, which were constructed by digging a shallow pit in the ground. A roof was made by crossing poles over the top of the pit and then covering the poles with branches, grass, or tree bark. The walls of the pit house were often lined with clay or stones.
- 9 Eventually, the Ancestral Puebloans began building homes above ground that were constructed of adobe and were sometimes two or three stories tall. The people farmed the land on top of the mesa, where they grew crops such as corn, beans, and squash. The mesa got little rainfall and was not easy land to farm. However, the farmers were expert in dryland farming, creating check dams and channels to direct rainwater to their crops. . . .
- 10 Then around 1100, these Native Americans mastered the art of masonry.<sup>2</sup> During the next hundred years they built remarkable cliff dwellings such as Cliff Palace. Now the Ancestral Puebloans no longer lived on top of the mesa. Their homes were built into the side of the cliff. People had to climb up to the mesa using footholds and handholds carved into the side of the cliff to tend their crops or hunt for food.
- 11 Around 1270, the Ancestral Puebloans left Mesa Verde, although we are not entirely sure why they left. We do know that these people settled the area that is now the home of the modern Pueblo tribes, including the Hopi, Zuni, Acoma, and Laguna.
- 12 The Ancestral Puebloans left behind no written records, so how do we know so much about them? First of all, the magnificent structures Ancestral Puebloans left behind provide archaeologists<sup>3</sup> with clues about the way these ancient people lived and indicate that they were skillful builders. The art of the Ancestral Puebloans provides another insight into who they were and how they lived.
- 13 Petroglyphs carved on cliff walls and rocks and wall paintings inside the homes tell stories about their everyday lives. . . .



## A National Park

- 14 As Wetherill and Mason explored Cliff Palace that day in 1888, they counted 150 rooms plus more than 23 underground rooms with fire pits. Over the next 15 months, the Wetherill family found and explored 182 different cliff dwellings in Mesa Verde.
- 15 In 1891, the Swedish scientist Gustaf E. A. Nordenskiöld photographed, sketched, and collected artifacts at Mesa Verde. His book, *The Cliff Dwellers of the Mesa Verde*, is considered the first scientific study of Mesa Verde. Once word of the cliff dwellings spread, people were curious. Many looters and treasure seekers began visiting the area, too. As early as 1889, and again in 1890, Richard Wetherill's father wrote letters to the Smithsonian Institution, urging them to protect Mesa Verde.
- 16 Finally, on June 29, 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt declared Mesa Verde a national park. This meant that the U.S. government would own, protect, and preserve Mesa Verde and all of its treasures. It was the first cultural park in the U.S. National Park System, and it became a UNESCO<sup>4</sup> World Heritage Site on September 8, 1978. The park covers over 52,000 acres and protects more than 4,000 archaeological sites. . . .
- 17 Today, more than 600,000 visitors enjoy the amazing sites at Mesa Verde National Park each year. Standing on top of the mesa, visitors have breathtaking views of steep mountainsides and deep canyons as eagles soar overhead. If they look carefully across the vast canyon, as Wetherill and Mason did so long ago, they can see the remains of villages tucked under cliff overhangs—villages that provide them with a step back in time.

<sup>1</sup>**alcove:** an area that is set back and covered

<sup>2</sup>**masonry:** building with stone and bricks

<sup>3</sup>**archaeologists:** scientists who study prehistoric cultures

<sup>4</sup>**UNESCO:** United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

**36**

What is the meaning of the word “intact” as used in paragraph 3?

- A** perfectly preserved
- B** completely finished
- C** in a shady place
- D** in a delicate condition

**37**

How do the events in paragraphs 1 and 2 relate to the information in paragraph 7?

- A** Paragraph 7 gives historical context for the discovery in paragraphs 1 and 2.
- B** Paragraph 7 describes the ancestors of the cowboys in paragraphs 1 and 2.
- C** Paragraph 7 provides additional details about the land in paragraphs 1 and 2.
- D** Paragraph 7 shows a different culture than that in paragraphs 1 and 2.

**38**

As used in paragraph 7, what does the word “adept” suggest about the Ancestral Puebloans?

- A** They think architecture is more important than farming.
- B** They have a range of skills necessary for their survival.
- C** Farming the land takes up a majority of their time.
- D** Being physically strong is one of their most valuable traits.

**GO ON**

39

How do the details in paragraphs 8 through 10 help develop a central idea of the article?

- A They describe the progress made by the Ancestral Puebloans in architecture.
- B They illustrate how the unpredictable weather affected the ability to build homes.
- C They explain why the Ancestral Puebloans were forced to leave their territory.
- D They show how little effort was put into the early housing structures.

40

Which sentence **best** shows the author's viewpoint?

- A "Wetherill and Mason had discovered a large cliff dwelling that had been abandoned hundreds of years ago by ancient Pueblo people." (paragraph 3)
- B "Builders filled in the spaces where the stone bricks fit together with smaller stones, mud, and wood pieces." (paragraph 4)
- C "For about 700 years, Mesa Verde was a thriving community of many thousands of Native American people now referred to as Ancestral Puebloans." (paragraph 7)
- D "We do know that these people settled the area that is now the home of the modern Pueblo tribes, including the Hopi, Zuni, Acoma, and Laguna." (paragraph 11)

41

Which detail **best** expresses a central idea of the section "A National Park"?

- A "Over the next 15 months, the Wetherill family found and explored 182 different cliff dwellings in Mesa Verde." (paragraph 14)
- B "Many looters and treasure seekers began visiting the area, too." (paragraph 15)
- C "... the U.S. government would own, protect, and preserve Mesa Verde and all of its treasures." (paragraph 16)
- D "... more than 600,000 visitors enjoy the amazing sites at Mesa Verde National Park each year." (paragraph 17)

**GO ON**

**42**

How does the author develop a connection between the cowboys and the Pueblo cliff dwelling?

- A** by recounting the cowboys' journey in order to introduce the setting
- B** by detailing the path to the site to show the difficulty of getting there
- C** by describing the weather to emphasize the unpredictability of the environment
- D** by explaining the cowboys' skills to compare them to the ancient people

**GO ON**

## Directions

Read this story. Then answer questions 43 and 44.

### Excerpt from *Shadows Under the Sea*

by Sally Grindley

- 1        They soon arrived at the marker buoys at the edge of the Marine Protected Area. Rey cut the *banca*'s<sup>1</sup> engine and allowed the boat to drift while they put on their equipment and got ready to lower themselves into the water. . . .
- 2        "Stay close to Rey," Angela called as she slipped into the water with Binti. "He'll make sure you're safe and will show you where the seahorses are most commonly found."
- 3        Rey dropped into the water last. To Joe's surprise, he wasn't wearing a snorkel, just a small pair of goggles carved out of wood and he only had a home-made flipper on one foot. . . .
- 4        With that, he grabbed a rope that hung down from the front of the *banca*, took a deep breath, turned a somersault in the water and disappeared under the surface, pulling the boat along behind him so that the gas lamp lit his route. He resurfaced several metres away before plunging in again.
- 5        Joe pulled down his mask, bit on the mouthpiece of the snorkel, rolled on to his front and carefully lowered his face into the sea. He felt the gentle ripple of the waves as he waited for his eyes to focus. When they did, he was filled with wonder at what he saw. The shapes and colours of the reef were more extraordinary than anything he had seen in books or on television and the noise was almost deafening. It was like entering a garden created by someone from a different planet. Fish of every size and hue were flitting in all directions, stopping briefly to explore nooks and crannies for food. Bright red anemones waved their tentacles alongside deep-purple sea urchins. Orange starfish crept over yellow sponge-like corals. Joe recognized a lionfish and followed its progress as it swam through crevices and willowy fronds. Then an enormous grey fish emerged just below him. He was so excited that he opened his mouth to call out—and immediately swallowed a large amount of briny water. Spluttering and choking, he rolled over to find Rey right next to him, grinning from ear to ear and holding a big crab. . . .
- 6        He let the crab go, took hold of the rope and disappeared again. When at last he came back up, some distance away, he gestured to Joe's family to come and join him.
- 7        "Here," he said. "Seahorses."

- 8        The Brooks followed Rey as he tracked down several seahorses and pipefish. Their guide even cupped one seahorse in his hand and gave it first to Aesha and then Joe to hold. Joe was thrilled when the seahorse curled its black-and-yellow-striped tail round his finger.
- 9        “That’s a tiger tail seahorse.” Angela took off her mask to inform them. “They’re so well camouflaged that only someone as experienced as Rey can spot them, even though they’re bigger here than outside the Marine Protected Area.”
- 10       “He’s so cute,” said Aesha. “I can see why people are tempted to keep them as pets, even though it’s cruel.” . . .
- 11       For an hour they explored where the seahorses were most abundant. Rey led them to other sea creatures as well and every few seconds something new came into view.

<sup>1</sup>**banca:** small boat used in the Pacific Ocean

**GO ON**

43

This question is worth 2 credits.

In *Shadows Under the Sea*, what do paragraphs 8 through 10 reveal about seahorses? Use **two** details from the story to support your response.

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44

This question is worth 2 credits.

In *Shadows Under the Sea*, what do Binti, Joe, and Aesha Brook learn by visiting the Marine Protected Area? Use **two** details from the story to support your response.

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**GO ON**



## **D**irections

Read this article. Then answer questions 45 and 46.

# Excerpt from *Sea Horses*

*by Steven Otfinoski*

### **In Dangerous Waters . . .**

- 1        The sea horse is extremely vulnerable to attack. It has nothing with which to defend itself. To make matters worse, with its small weak fins, it cannot make a quick getaway either. Its main defense is camouflage. A sea horse can hide from predators by latching onto a holdfast and staying perfectly still for long periods. Its naturally black or gray body often blends into its surroundings. If the background is a different color, the sea horse has the ability to change color to match it. Some sea horses can actually produce stringy growths on their body and heads to blend in with the plant growth they hide in. . . .

### **Sea Horses and People**

- 2        Of all the predators that threaten the sea horse, none has proved more harmful than people. Around the world, fishing boats catch and kill millions of sea horses each year. Many are caught accidentally in nets meant to catch other fish and shellfish. Some sea horses, however, are caught on purpose. . . .
- 3        Some captured sea horses are kept alive to be sold as pets for home aquariums in North America and Europe. Most of them quickly die in their new surroundings. Stressed by an unfamiliar environment, their immune system fails and they become prone to many diseases. Many pet sea horses starve because they will eat only prey, such as brine shrimp. They also don't usually breed in captivity, further endangering the world's overall sea horse population. . . .
- 4        What can be done to save the sea horse? It is unlikely that fishing for sea horses will be banned as many countries, especially in Asia, have a long tradition of using sea horses in medicines. Even if this trade in sea horses was outlawed, it would continue illegally.
- 5        The captive breeding of sea horses is another option. The science of aquaculture has developed technology to raise many sea creatures, including sea horses, on special aquatic or water-based "farms." Sea horses bred in captivity would be healthier and better able to fight disease. They would be better suited as well to aquarium life. Sea horses raised in Asian fishing villages with aquaculture programs could be bought and sold for medicines and other uses. People would not have to capture sea horses in the wild, and populations would increase as a result.

**GO ON**

- 6            Organizations such as Project Seahorse are working around the world to preserve and protect the coastal areas where sea horses and other creatures live. Scientists study the sea horse and how it interacts with the world around it. They then use this knowledge to educate people and to promote the health of sea horses worldwide. There is still much to be learned about the sea horse. If people around the world work together, we can save this strange and beautiful creature for the enjoyment and wonder of generations to come.

***GO ON***

45

This question is worth 2 credits.

What is a central idea of *Sea Horses*? Use **two** details from the article to support your response.

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*Planning Page*

You may PLAN your writing for question 46 here if you wish, but do NOT write your final answer on this page. Writing on this Planning Page will NOT count toward your final score. Write your final answer on Pages 21 and 22.



**GO ON**

46

**This question is worth 4 credits.**

The authors of *Shadows Under the Sea* and *Sea Horses* inform the reader about the need to protect seahorses. What information does each author provide? How does each author use evidence to support the idea of protecting seahorses? Which author provides more effective information? Use details from **both** the story and the article to support your response.

In your response, be sure to

- identify the information each author provides to the reader about the need to protect seahorses
- explain how each author uses evidence to support the idea of protecting seahorses
- evaluate which author provides more effective information
- use details from **both** the story and the article to support your response

[illegible]